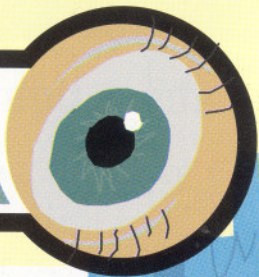


The Blink-off

by Sharon L. Norris



“Let’s have a blink-off,” Jon said to his sister, Sally.

“What’s a blink-off?” asked Sally.

“We stare at each other, and the first one to blink loses,” Jon said.

“OK. Bet I can beat you.”

Jon shook his head. “No one can beat me. I’m the Blink-master.”

Sally stood in front of him. “Let’s see.”

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Jon looked into Sally’s eyes for long seconds.
He didn’t blink.

And he didn’t blink.

And he *still* didn’t blink.

Sally tried hard, but her eyes began to hurt ...


and shake ...

and bulge ...

and ...

BLINK!

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Sally couldn't help it. She just *had* to blink.

"Ha!" shouted Jon. "I beat you!"
"It's just a silly game," Sally said.
Their friend Paul came to visit.
"Let's have a blink-off," Jon said.
"OK, Blink-master," said Paul,
and he came to stand in front of Jon.
Jon looked into Paul's dark eyes
for long seconds.

He didn't blink.
And he didn't blink.
And he *still* didn't blink.
Paul tried hard, but his eyes
began to hurt ...

and shake ...
and bulge ...
and ...
BLINK!

Paul couldn't help it. He just *had* to blink.

"Ha!" shouted Jon. "I beat you!"

Paul nodded. "Let's try again."

Jon won time and time again.

"Ho ho! Hey hey! The Blink-master's won again!" Jon sang as he danced around the room.

Paul and Sally looked at each other.

"Hey hey! Ho ho! The Blink-master's got to go!" Sally said.

"But how?" Paul asked. "Someone has to beat him."

Sally's smile was bright. "I know someone who can beat him."

"Who?" Paul scratched his head.

A large white cat brushed past Sally. She bent down and picked the cat up. "Snowball," she said.

Paul laughed. "A cat?"

Sally nodded. "Snowball will win the blink-off."

"Here's your next challenger, Jon," Sally said, holding up the cat.

Jon's mouth sagged open. "Snowball! Get real, Sally. Bring me a *real* challenger!" he said.

Paul folded his arms. "Can't you beat a silly old cat, Jon?"

"Of course I can," Jon said. "I'm the Blink-master. No one beats me – especially not a silly cat."



Jon flopped down onto the sofa. Sally placed Snowball on his lap.

Jon looked into Snowball's wide green eyes for long seconds. He didn't blink.

And he didn't blink.

And he still didn't blink.

Nor did Snowball. The cat just looked at him with her wide green eyes and did nothing.

A minute later, Jon still hadn't blinked.

Nor had Snowball.

Two minutes later, he still hadn't blinked.

Nor had Snowball.

Jon's eyes began to hurt ...

and shake ...

and bulge ...

and ...

BLINK!

He blinked.

Snowball began to purr. She jumped down off Jon's lap and ran away.

"Beaten by a cat?" Jon said. "But how?"

Now it was Sally's turn to dance around the room.

"Hey hey! Ho ho!" she sang. "Cats don't blink, don't you know?"

Do Cats Blink?

Cats do blink, but not nearly as often as humans do.

Inside its eyelids, a cat has a "third eyelid" or "membrane" that closes over its eyes to keep them moist and protect them from dust while the cat is asleep. You can sometimes see this membrane when cats blink or when they are dozing with their eyes half open.



illustrations by Ali Teo